



Submission to Education and Training Workforce Study: the VET workforce

Professor Erica Smith, July 30th 2010

The VET workforce is of paramount importance in delivering high quality teaching and training that is relevant to the needs of industry and society. Curiously, far less attention appears to be paid to this workforce than to those which service other sectors of education such as school education. Early childhood and school educators are required to have higher levels of pedagogical qualification than vocational educators; university educators are increasingly being required to have graduate qualifications in teaching, and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) provides a high profile for university teaching and funding for university teacher development. Yet the VET workforce is required only to have a Certificate IV level teaching qualification and there is no national body to promote VET teaching.

It is therefore very welcome to note the increased attention to the VET workforce nationally, of which the Productivity Commission study is one aspect.

My submission is based on extensive research into VET teaching and VET teacher-training, my role as a VET teacher-educator, and as a former VET practitioner in TAFE and a private RTO. I was also the founding convenor of AVTEC, a national network of people interested in the VET workforce and its development, and a member of the former national steering committee for the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Factors affecting the current and future demand for the VET workforce, and the required mix of skills and knowledge

VET teaching is widely distributed among different settings. Teachers and trainers work in TAFE Institutes, adult and community education, commercial training organisations and within enterprises. It is assumed that the scope of the VET workforce for the purposes of this study is confined to those delivering nationally-recognised training (ie excluding other people who deliver non-accredited training), but even so the scope is very broad and the edges are quite blurred. The demand for the VET workforce is therefore very broad, and is also quite differentiated as different types of provider and different discipline areas require different sets of skills.

The nature of VET teachers' work is becoming increasingly diverse as institutional-based teachers often deliver in workplace and other settings. The increased coverage of nationally-recognised training through the growth in training packages has meant that different learner groups are now being taught in a boarder range of industries. More higher level qualifications are now being delivered but there are also increased numbers of learners at the 'lower end' who require extra assistance and skilled intervention.

VET providers and their workforces are required to be entrepreneurial in seeking new business both with individual learners and with enterprises; while private RTOs are familiar with this, it is still unfamiliar territory for some teachers in some TAFE institutes. Balancing a business focus with quality and rigour is not easy at all time and is an additional skill for the VET workforce. Such skills are not confined to managers; they are part of every teacher's daily interaction with students and their employing companies. Enterprise based trainers have a different but not dissimilar need for a

business focus. It is generally the case that good quality in training goes hand in hand with growing a training business.

It is traditional in VET for a proportion of teaching/training to be carried out by part-time and casual staff. It is often said that this proportion is increasing, although a recent research study I managed for Service Skills Australia¹ suggests that the proportion of such staff is lower than is believed. I have not seen any other firm data either way. Providers, particularly private RTOs, understand that to retain good teachers/trainers, permanent jobs need to be offered.

Industry currency is much discussed but little explored. In our recent project for Service Skills Australia, my colleagues and I developed a new term 'industry engagement' which refers to more advanced and complex methods of engaging with industry. Simply working part-time in an industry provides only a very basic level of industry engagement and 'return to industry' programs are not well structured. I have attached (Appendix 1) a Campus Review article which I wrote on this topic².

I think that the widely-held view that the VET sector is necessarily more complex than any other education sector may be exaggerated. In higher education (and in school education, although arguably to a lesser extent) as well as VET, teachers are required to fulfil other roles including that of developing new programs and marketing them; in both school and university teaching, teachers are required to keep up with their discipline base as well as with teaching. All education sectors have a proportion of contract and casual staff and face challenges in managing them. All sectors have a range of stakeholders; industry and employers are stakeholders in university education as much as in VET. The challenges associated with the VET workforce can be met, with appropriate strategies.

The current and future supply of the VET workforce

Vocational education does not have a high profile as an occupation, and providers sometimes struggle to find appropriate applicants for positions, particularly in rural areas and industry areas in which the industry workforce is experiencing a skills shortage and consequently wages are high, eg mining, electrical. Particularly in TAFE, teachers are sometimes attracted to job because of the working hours and holidays, and so, for some, this conflicts with the increased demands being placed upon teachers to be more flexible in their working arrangements. Teachers/trainers from RTOs may be attracted back into the industry as a result of their interactions with industry clients.

To some extent the relatively low status of VET teaching may reflect the comparatively low status of VET occupations in Australian society. This may explain its relatively low profile compared with school teaching and university teaching, although in practice VET teaching may be more complex and demanding than much school teaching. The lack of an agreed name for VET teacher/trainer is also an issue. In our Service Skills Australia report we suggested 'vocational educator'.

The structures of the workforce and its consequent efficiency and effectiveness

While private RTOs have a strong focus on responsiveness this is not the case at all levels in all TAFE Institutes. Teachers/trainers attracted to teaching in previous decades may find that the job had changed to one they are not particularly comfortable with. In my research I have found much variation within and between providers in teachers' readiness to embrace new roles. TAFE Institutes are of course constrained by industrial agreements which add an extra layer of complexity.

While there is general agreement that VET teacher quality is important, there are no clear and agreed methods for achieving a minimum standard of quality. The Certificate IV in Training and

¹ Smith, E., Brennan Kemmis, R., Grace, L. & Payne, W. (2009). *Workforce development for service industries VET practitioners*. Sydney: Service Skills Australia. Full report at <http://www.serviceskills.com.au/past-project-reports>

² Smith, E. (2010). Industry engagement: The new currency, *Campus Review*, 8 June, 12.

Assessment is not a very high-level qualification and is very often delivered very poorly and/or subject to inappropriate levels of RPL. State TAFE systems have withdrawn from the practice of enrolling their teachers into degree level teaching qualifications and those enrolled in such qualifications (approximately 2000) are those most dedicated to personal and professional development. Since Reframing the Future was terminated there has not been any strategic national professional development in VET. Some STAs provide very good development activities for RTO staff, and State TAFE systems provide good development for their staff and in the case of NSW TAFE's ICVET online resources, make this more broadly available.

Workforce development

For the Service Skills report previously referred to, we developed a model of workforce development that was based on the workforce development strategy for the further education workforce in the UK.

This model considers workforce development in three priorities; in line with the original UL model we have named these: understanding the nature of the workforce, attracting and recruiting the best people; and retaining and developing the modern professionalised workforce. The three priorities encompass eight themes. Appendix 2 consists of part of the chapter of the report which presents and discusses this model. It should be remembered that the report was about Service Skills VET practitioners only; however many of the points are generally applicable.

VET teacher/trainer standards

In my view there is an urgent need for a set of VET teacher/trainer standards. There are many models to select from but at the least the following features should be included

- The standards should cover a range of 'domains' which would include some domains particular to some jobs and not to others.
- The standards should be designed at different levels so that practitioners can achieve a beginning, middle or advanced level in one or more domains.
- The standards should not be compulsory and no registration should be required. This would be impossible in such a diverse sector. However, providers should be encouraged to utilise them in their recruitment, HR processes, quality processes and marketing; and individuals would want to use them in their career development planning.

Moreover I suggest that a national body akin to the ALTC should be developed as the guardian of the standards and as a body for promoting VET workforce development. The ALTC could even encompass such a body, and in effect service both VET and higher education sectors, within different divisions; however this may not be acceptable to the higher education sector.

The new currency

VET teachers need to be engaged with their stock in trade, be relevant and up to date and have a relationship with industry as a whole. By Erica Smith.

After some time in the wilderness, the concept of industry currency has, over the past five years or so, become a topic for comment and research. The relative neglect of the concept until recently has not meant that, as an activity, it has been ignored, either by VET teachers or by RTO managers. But it does mean that there has not been a proper framework within which to discuss or analyse it. The vague thinking around the concept has also meant that expectations laid upon teachers have not been clearly articulated by their employing registered training organisations (RTOs). Typically, the maintenance of industry currency has been left up to individual teachers rather than managed by the RTOs.

Industry currency is often defined along the lines of “the maintenance of a trainer’s vocational technical skills and knowledge”. However, this seems quite a narrow definition. A recent research project undertaken for Service Skills Australia, with colleagues Ros Brennan Kemmis, Lauri Grace and Warren Payne, led us to start thinking of a broader definition of the concept.

We came up with the term industry engagement.

What led us to this broader view? The project, which was aimed at developing a workforce development strategy for VET practitioners for the service industries, involved us in many conversations with industry representatives, RTO managers, VET practitioners and students about what makes a good VET practitioner. (The report is at www.serviceskills.com.au – follow links to New Deal, Project 2).

The need to be close to industry came up again and again in our research. However, we found quite differing

degrees of sophistication in people’s visualisation of this attribute. Some people thought it meant that teachers needed to have up-to-date technical skills to enable them in turn to teach students those skills. For example, teachers needed to be able confidently to operate the latest coffee machines, or to use up-to-date travel booking systems. It was also generally agreed that teachers needed to be aware of the reality of working in the relevant industry sector. In this way, they learned to apply new skills in context. So, for example, keeping a toehold in the industry through part-time working was generally seen as a good thing. In one RTO included in our research, all hairdressing teachers were employed on 0.8 contracts so that they would work in a salon for one day a week. Such activities enabled them to provide students with war stories which, we found, students appreciated greatly.

However, we found that some teachers went a great deal further than this. Some were actively involved in

industry networks, both in Australia and, in some cases, overseas; they not only read industry journals and attended events but, in some cases, were active in shaping the industry through prominent positions in professional organisations.

Some teachers focused on understanding the way their industry operated in a broad range of contexts. For example, in hospitality they actively sought an understanding of small cafes, fine dining restaurants, hotel chains and so on. This understanding was gained from a range of activities including multiple working or placement experiences, working with employers in traineeship programs, learning from students, and talking to colleagues with experience of different contexts. What characterised the effective practitioners in this area was that they took the opportunity, when entering the different contexts, actively to observe and seek information from a range of staff, from senior managers to

shop-floor staff. These teachers were able to impart to their own students a much broader view of the relevant industry than those who could only fall back on their own limited working experience.

Finally, the most sophisticated level of understanding was those teachers who looked beyond their own industry or industries to the economy as a whole. The practitioners

at this end of the spectrum were probably operating well beyond the expectations of their local industry partners, yet their expertise would undoubtedly add value to the more basic interactions on which local enterprises might focus.

The research team's discussions of these different approaches led us to the adoption of the term industry engagement rather

than industry currency. Engagement implies a process rather than just an attribute; it recognises that VET teachers never reach a stage of perfect understanding of their industry – rather, they are involved in a continuous process.

Moreover, it also implies a relationship with industry as a whole, rather than just one industry. This broad definition helps

to provide a hook into industry engagement for the generic VET practitioners, such as language literacy and numeracy teachers who feel disconnected from the concept of currency. Our new term opens up the area to new debates and developments.

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Appendix 2: Excerpt from

Smith, E., Brennan Kemmis, R., Grace, L. & Payne, W. (2009). *Workforce development for service industries VET practitioners*. Sydney: Service Skills Australia.
<http://www.serviceskills.com.au/past-project-reports>

Service Skills VET practitioner workforce development strategy

A workforce development strategy based on eight elements is proposed. The strategy is depicted in Table 1 (below) which is adapted from the UK's Further Education workforce development strategy. The three priorities are the same as the UK strategy but the themes are adapted for the Australian context and the service skills context.

Table 1: Themes underpinning a workforce development strategy for Service Skills VET practitioners

Priority 1 Understanding the nature of the workforce	Priority 2 Attracting and recruiting the best people	Priority 3 Retaining and developing the modern, professionalised workforce
Theme 1 Gathering robust data on the workforce	Theme 4 Recruiting and retaining the people we need	Theme 7 Appropriate leadership and management development, and a flexible, fair and supportive working environment.
Theme 2 Using data to understand the workforce and improve future planning	Theme 5 The improvements people would like to see in the VET workforce	Theme 8 Identifying, planning and delivering development programs for the needs of the VET workforce: at national, RTO and individual level
Theme 3 The ideal VET practitioner attributes	Theme 6 Improving and promoting the image of the VET workforce	

Adapted from 'The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007-1012', Lifelong Learning UK
<http://www.lluk.org/fe-workforce-strategy.htm>.

The shading of Theme 8 in Table 1 indicates that it will be the focus of the report's recommendations, but all of the themes are involved in improving the VET workforce for the service industries.

Theme 1 Gathering robust data on the workforce

It has been notoriously difficult to gather data on the VET workforce – this is for several reasons:

- Who counts as the VET workforce: Who is 'in' or 'out'? For example, should workplace trainers be included?

- Even the measurable VET sector yields poor statistics. As well as around 70 TAFE institutes there are over 4000 private RTOs (1623 of whom deliver Service Skills qualifications) whose reporting requirements are low except when delivering publicly-funded programs.
- The large proportion of part-time and casual practitioners makes record-keeping very difficult for large providers.
- There is a high turnover of staff in the sector.

How could better data be collected?

- Nationally across all industry sectors, this could be done systematically by requiring data on teachers/trainers as part of the national VET statistical collection;
- Capturing workplace trainers and others not working for RTOs would probably be impossible, although from time to time ABS data collection may provide figures about numbers of trainers that may intersect with what is required (eg Dumbrell, 1998);
- Better communication between bodies that have an interest in the VET workforce can aid data collection, such as Innovation and Business Skills Australia, STAs, the Australian Education Union, universities and RTOs that train VET teachers/trainers, the Australian Vocational Education and Training Teacher Educators' Colloquium (AVTEC), the Australian Institute of Training and Development. The data collected through work undertaken by these bodies should be nationally shared and collated;
- Within the Service Skills sector, data could be gathered by repeating our survey from time to time, with improvements as suggested under Theme 2.

Theme 2 Using data to understand the workforce and improve future planning

The data collected needs to be able to inform future workforce planning and development activities. For this to happen we need to know:

- Educational qualifications of the VET workforce – both in teaching/training and in the industry;
- The nature of the qualifications that will be needed in the future, both in teaching/training and in the industry;
- The employment status of the workforce;
- Diversity within the VET workforce (eg age, gender, cultural and linguistic diversity);
- The types of RTOs for which people work;
- The range of their work (eg range of industry areas and of locations);
- Their career paths and aspirations;
- The nature of available professional development opportunities and uptake rates;
- The level of awareness of available professional development opportunities and their credibility in the eyes of teachers/trainers and their employers; and
- The level of commitment and funding that industry, RTOs, individual practitioners and governments are prepared to allocate to workforce development.

We have not captured all of the above data in our survey, but future surveys of Service Skills RTOs focusing more on the nature of the workforce could capture extra data.

Data should then be disseminated to relevant bodies including

- Other bodies with an interest in the VET workforce (as above);
- The industries which the Service Skills VET practitioner workforce services.

The data collection needs to be informed by the uses to which the data will be put, and so further consultation should take place before future surveys are undertaken.

Theme 3: The attributes of the 'ideal' VET practitioner

Our project helped to build up a picture of what is seen as an ideal VET practitioner. These attributes are divided into those which apply particularly to the teaching/training role and those which involve application of generic skills to the role.

Specific to teaching/training role

- **An appropriate balance between industry knowledge and skills and educational knowledge and skills** - All recognised that both were needed but the specific nature of the industry area influenced the relative balance between industry skills and educational qualifications. In all cases industry knowledge and skills were viewed as more important.
- **Information technology skills** - VET practitioners with these skills are well equipped to take advantage of the new technologies for their own learning and development and the development of these skills in their students through the integration of digital technologies in teaching and learning.
- **Monitoring students' progress and regular reporting of student progress** - The ability to regularly monitor and appropriately report on student progress to the different audiences (RTO, enterprise, learner) is a critical skill for the VET practitioner.
- **Respect and empathy for students** - VET practitioners who displayed respect and empathy for their students and respect for their progress as learners were highly regarded.
- **Passion for the industry and commitment to quality.** It seemed that passion for the industry and passion for good teaching went hand in hand.
- **Training delivery and assessment skills** - All qualities of the ideal practitioner were underpinned by confidence in how to plan, deliver, adjust, assess and evaluate student learning.

Generic skills

- **High level literacy skills** - These skills equip practitioners to work with a variety of students by providing high quality support for their learning. High levels of literacy also assist in the implementation of Training Packages, the development of curriculum and appropriate assessment strategies, and in the negotiation of complex and complementary arrangements with industry.
- **Flexibility** - high levels of flexibility allows practitioners to meet the needs of multiple clients who are being served in VET training i.e.: employers, industry, a diverse body of individual learners, funding agencies and quality systems.
- **Effective communication skills** - These are essential for teaching and for developing and taking advantage of opportunities for industry currency
- **Exchanging ideas on practice** - VET practitioners who learnt from each and built a store of knowledge spoke of a team based and knowledge sharing approach which benefited their teaching.
- **A personal disposition towards constant learning and continual improvements in teaching and learning.** Such a disposition included a propensity to reflect on one's practice, to seek out learning opportunities from many sources including their students, and to benchmark against other practitioners.

Theme 4: Recruiting and retaining the people we need

Recruitment and retention of good staff emerged as frequent themes in the data collection for this project. The presence in many RTOs of high proportions of casual staff contributes to the difficulties associated with recruiting and retaining high quality staff. However the survey showed that casualisation was not a feature of some RTOs.

An effective RTO shows the following features:

1. Overall planning strategies used at an RTO level.

- An ability to **identify** its workforce needs through planning processes that focus on longer rather than shorter cycles.
- Budget planning includes **detailed projections** of the staff needed, their qualifications and experience (and therefore cost) and their 'fit' with the current and future needs of the organisation.
- Staff profiles are **evaluated** in terms of the contribution that the employment of an individual will make to the 'ethos' and capacity of the whole organisation to deliver high quality programs.
- Recruitment and retention of staff are considered to be integral parts of the **planning processes** of the RTO, and the effectiveness of the strategies is evaluated on an annual basis.

2. Recruitment at an RTO level:

- A **staffing needs analysis** is undertaken across the RTO and positions are advertised and staff are recruited on the basis of current and projected needs.
- Staff are recruited who demonstrate an **appropriate employment history** that balances industry experience and educational qualifications.
- The **particular needs of the RTO's student cohort** (eg: low literacy levels, English as a second language) are considered when recruiting staff for full and part time positions.
- **Higher level educational qualifications** will be needed in future with a particular focus on supervisory and management skills, and current recruitment will reflect these projected needs.
- A '**critical mass**' of **well qualified full time staff** are employed to provide continuity, induction, mentoring and curriculum and pedagogical support to new and part time staff.

3. Retention at an RTO level:

- **Performance management** is used as a developmental tool and to encourage staff confidence in proper management procedures.
- **Mentoring** is provided for new staff within the organisation.
- **Partnerships with industry** that are established and supported at an RTO level provide interest and development opportunities for teachers/trainers.
- **Career paths are explicit** within the organisation and opportunities for development and growth are encouraged.
- **A feeling of pride in the quality of the RTO** prevents staff leaving.

RTO managers including Human Resource staff (where available) themselves need to be provided with training and support to develop the skills and practices associated with workforce planning outlined above.

Theme 5: Improvements required for the VET workforce

The analysis of the nature of the VET workforce compared with the attributes desired by industry, learners and the practitioners themselves, suggests that the VET workforce for the service industries needs to improve in the following ways:

- Improved vocational competence;
- More flexible approach to industry clients and to students;
- Greater confidence in working with industry clients;
- Greater understanding of industry and companies, beyond simple technical competence;
- Higher level qualifications, both in pedagogy and in industry area;
- Improved teaching skills;
- Increased engagement in professional development activity;
- Benchmarking of skills and knowledge against other VET practitioners and against industry practitioners;

- The nurturing of passion for the relevant industry;
- Greater attention to the development of a service culture in the learners;
- Increased levels of leadership and management skills in the workforce.

At a national level there may need to be more attention to diversity in the VET workforce – particularly to teachers/trainers who are indigenous and are from different countries of origin or ethnic backgrounds.

Theme 6: Improving and promoting the image of the VET workforce

COAG (2009) mentioned the lack of professional recognition for VET practitioners compared to university lecturers or school teachers. We suggest that the improvement and promotion of the image of the VET workforce can be achieved through:

At the national level, government support for VET practitioners through a focus on the role of the VET practitioner as well as the current focus on meeting the needs of industry; a designated government funding pool dedicated to developing and showcasing the skills of the VET practitioner with a focus on pedagogy as well as industry engagement; high-level governmental attention to improvements in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the minimum qualification for VET teachers; and a refocusing of compliance requirements for RTOs to encourage better teaching and training.

More generally, higher status for the occupations for which VET prepares and upgrades learners, and particularly for service sector occupations, which are often undervalued, would help upgrade the image of the VET workforce.

At the RTO level, the development of industry partnerships that focus, as part of a broader set of relationships, on promoting the value of high quality training and the worth of high quality VET practitioners, on ensuring that staff are ‘industry current’ and engaged in industry-based activities and events as a way of increasing sector wide credibility and on utilising the strengths and qualifications of teaching/training staff as a marketing point.

The lack of a proper term for a VET practitioner is a problem. The term ‘practitioner’ means little and is confusing to non-experts in VET. ‘Teacher’ and ‘trainer’ each lack attractiveness to people in particular contexts. ‘Facilitator’ has some support, but like ‘practitioner’ has a range of meanings. ‘Educator’ seems to have greater support and resonates with some paraprofessional on-the-job contexts such as nurse educators. While this issue is unresolved, it is difficult to market the job of VET practitioner.

Theme 7: Appropriate leadership and management development, and a flexible, fair and supportive working environment.

To improve the quality of their workforce, RTOs need to focus on performance management, strategic workforce planning and professional development to support these processes. Implementation of workforce development strategies depends greatly on the skills of managers in RTOs and partnering enterprises and their willingness to make a commitment to invest in teacher/trainer training and development. A supportive management attitude in RTOs is important because RTOs have experienced a dramatic increase in competitive pressure which is disturbing to some teachers/trainers, although the study found many managers reporting that their staff were happy to ‘step up to the plate’.

Workforce development depends partly on RTO working environments and whether they are conducive to staff learning. Chappell and Hawke (2008) developed a diagnostic tool that can be administered by RTOs to their staff to analyse staff perceptions of factors in their working environment that support or hinder learning at work. The scale contains 46 questions in two domains: 'organisational development' and 'job complexity'. The *Provider Learning Environment Scale* or other tools could be used by RTO managers to explore their organisation's learning environment.

RTO managers need to be prepared to invest substantial resources into development strategies. RTO managers need to use existing performance management systems to shape workforce development. Acceptance by VET practitioners varied in their acceptance of the need for professional development varied widely and some were reported to be resistant. Encouraging such staff to participate requires particular managerial skills and establishing appropriate 'sticks' and carrots'. The inclusion of part-time or casual staff is also problematic and requires special attention.

There is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' approach for RTO managers. The project identified considerable variety among the approaches to workforce development within Service Skills RTOs. Yet within this diversity, data from the case studies suggested that **the conditions to support workforce development** included:

- Developing a strong sense of the RTO's values and mission, ensuring that these values are shared by staff at all levels.
- Extending budgetary and planning periods to build in capacity for workforce development over a longer time period.
- Establishing champions to drive organisational change.
- Embedding workforce development in RTO management processes, such as annual planning of strategic directions for professional development.
- Encouraging hands-on involvement by managers in teaching and partnerships so that managers are aware of issues that arise daily.

Theme 8: Identifying, planning & developing development programs for the needs of the VET workforce: at national, RTO and individual level

At each of three levels, national, organisational and individual, there are opportunities and challenges for a VET practitioner workforce development strategy. These are identified in Table 2. The following strategies are suggested for development:

National cross-industry level

Improvements to the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment are required, regardless of whether Certificate IV remains the main benchmark. There should be greater recognition of higher-level pedagogical qualifications, for instance those offered by universities. There is a case for a lower-level or narrower qualification for those not working with nationally-recognised training. The effects of policy initiatives such as Victoria's Skills reforms on the affordability of VET teaching qualifications should be considered.

National standards for VET teaching could be developed, as in the current school-teaching model, and as in the UK model for further education teacher training courses.

There could be a continuing professional development requirement, possibly endorsed by an Institute for VET Practitioners. There should be awareness-raising about career possibilities within VET.

A better name for VET practitioners should be discussed, to improve the image of the occupation. 'Vocational educators' is one possibility.

National Service Skills industry level

Irrespective of whether cross-industry initiatives are taken, within the service industries certain initiatives could be pursued. These include the promotion of the need for both **industry engagement** and **pedagogical engagement** for VET practitioners with a clear description of what these concepts mean and how VET practitioners might be involved in them. At a national level, units of competency *Develop and maintain industry engagement*, *Develop and maintain pedagogical engagement*, could be developed, which could be delivered as CPD, as single units, or could be submitted to IBSA for inclusion in the 2010 improvements to the Diploma of Training and Assessment. These units should each have components in which industry specificity is delivered.

A Service Skills CPD framework could be developed which allocates points for different types of activities. National standards for Service Skills VET practitioners could be developed to underpin this framework. These could be developed at 'certified' level (as suggested in New Deal 3) and at 'master level', equivalent to school-teacher 'highly accomplished' standards. It is suggested that maintaining a national register of practitioners at these levels might be too much to undertake, and that instead the standards should be available for RTOs to use in performance management and promotion activities, and when applying for 'tick' status (see below), and for individuals to use in job applications or when applying for national awards. SSA could develop standards and/or a training program for 'Service Skills workplace trainer' for those not involved with the delivery or assessment of nationally-recognised training.

As in the UK, SSA could itself provide or broker a series of professional development activities at teacher or 'master teacher' level to address particular issues as periodically identified. These could be organised on an annual basis and could be locally arranged, along the lines of AVETRA's OctoberVET events. SSA could develop programs for 'structured work placements' for VET practitioners which could form part of the industry engagement units.

SSA could provide incentives for RTO level development by endorsing RTO professional development activities, funding demonstration professional development projects - perhaps in each of the service skills industry area – and disseminating their outcomes, developing a tick system for RTOs based on their professional development activities (eg number of activities or proportion of teachers/trainers involved). SSA could provide or broker development opportunities for RTO managers and HR Managers so that they can provide support for teacher/trainer development.

For individual level development, SSA could develop on-line teacher/trainer networks to complement on-line assessor networks. These could be generic or there could be special interest groups, focusing for example on industry engagement, pedagogical issues, and teaching international students. The networks could provide voluntary mentoring systems for new teachers/trainers or those new to certain activities (for example teaching international students) SSA could fund competitive scholarships for teachers/trainers, for example to cover cost of activities, qualifications, study visits. SSA could sponsor service skills teacher awards; there could be separate awards for industry engagement and pedagogical engagement, and an 'all-rounder' award, and/or awards for different industry clusters.

RTO level

Staff development needs to be demonstrably tailored to the needs of the staff, the learners and the relevant industry. It needs to be targeted to areas which have been identified as areas of weakness

amongst VET practitioners generally and in the specific RTO. Short-term reaction-led development such as responses to changes in audit regimes should be down-played; good professional development would result in practitioners who are able to respond to such short-term changes as a matter of course.

There needs to be a reconceptualisation of the ways in which **industry engagement** can be encouraged, acquired and maintained. This could include encouragement of regional and industry based networks that focus on the creation for opportunities for sharing expertise and for exploration of future trends. There should be bigger picture methods of looking at **pedagogical engagement** including benchmarking with other RTOs in similar or different areas. Staff should be encouraged to work across roles within the RTO to create a more flexible workforce able to work within a range of different contexts. Mentoring or ‘buddy’ schemes with industry people and for teaching/training should be instituted.

Professional development needs to be available, and of demonstrated use, to part-time and casual staff as well as full-timers. This could include greater use of available technologies. Training for departmental managers is required in developing the skills of their workforces and management of a diverse cohort of staff at different stages of their lives and careers

Individual level

While VET practitioners need to work within the requirements of their employing RTO(s) there is much individual activity that could be undertaken. This includes for **pedagogical engagement**, joining electronic networks for VET professional development, forming learning/discussion groups of teachers/trainers within the RTO and with neighbouring RTOs for mutual development and benchmarking, and attending events hosted by STAs or other external bodies. For **industry engagement**, individual teachers/trainers can seek an industry mentor, attend industry events, and join industry association. In both arenas, practitioners can utilise existing contacts with employers and students for their learning potential and subscribe to, or access through libraries, industry and VET journals. Teachers/trainers working with international students could consider undertaking at least short courses in relevant languages.

Table 2: Opportunities and challenges at national, RTO and individual level

Opportunities	Challenges
National level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on skills in national agendas eg COAG; • A recognition of the role of VET practitioners in developing skills in others; • A push for higher qualifications for the workforce as a whole and therefore a need for VET teachers/trainers with higher qualifications; and • There is current national attention to problems with the VET workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a generally agreed understanding on how big the VET workforce is, who is a part of it and who is not; • Little national structure for VET practitioner development; • No national standards for VET teaching/training other than AQTF requirements and Certificate IV TAA units; • A lack of respect for the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment; • Little political advocacy for VET practitioners as there has been for school teachers. There is no professional body; there is no single national union. The Australian Education Union represents TAFE teachers but not non-TAFE RTO teachers; and • In recent times (until 2009), there has been little political will to improve VET teaching; during the 1990s VET practitioners were largely invisible in VET documents.

RTO level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increasing awareness of the relationship between good quality teaching and the acquisition of higher skill levels amongst students; • A growing awareness among enterprises of the potential of qualifications for their workforces and a willingness to engage with RTOs; • A growing ethos of flexibility and continuous improvement among VET teachers/trainers; • The availability of a range of projects, consultancies, seminars, conferences professional associations initiated by industry but available to RTO staff; • An increase in the availability of new technologies that can link staff across regions and industries; • Our data has showed that the VET workforce, while mature, is not particularly 'greying'; and • The large proportion of RTOs that are not part of the TAFE system have ready opportunities to reward staff through pay rises for appropriate individual development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a tradition among RTOs of demanding qualifications beyond the Cert IV demanded by the AQTF. Therefore it would be bold for an individual RTO, in a tight labour market, to be the first to demand better-qualified teachers/trainers; • The increasingly competitive market and the global financial crisis mean that the budget available for staff development and professional development activities may fall, especially in those RTOs dependent on overseas students; • The presence of large numbers of part-time and casual teachers/trainers makes professional development difficult to disseminate and monitor; • Some part-time/casual staff work for more than one RTO, who may have differing views of quality standards; • The amount of available time for professional development is often utilised by compliance and reporting requirements; • Inadequacy of the TAA in terms for rigour and depth as the initial teacher preparation credential for new entrants into the training area, meaning that RTO strategies may start from a very low base; and • The 'culture' of well established RTOs can create barriers to new and creative ways of developing their workforces.
Individual level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some RTOs and TAFE systems reward staff for higher level qualifications through promotion and/or higher pay; • Higher level of performance increases the possibility of higher level job offers, particularly for staff whose work is highly visible in industry; • VET practitioners have access to a range of electronic networks and discussion lists and of freely available e-resources such as ICVET; • In some States and Territories, low-cost professional development activities are offered by STAs, in regional areas as well as capital cities; and • Contact with students provides opportunities for learning about the industry as well as about student learning needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service skills VET practitioners tend to have low levels of formal qualifications. The types of development strategies that people feel comfortable with therefore varies considerably; • The dual identity of VET practitioners means that there is a varying degree of willingness to move from being an industry person who passes on his or her skills to being a teacher/trainer; • Opportunities for the renewal of industry currency vary among RTOs and among industry areas; • Many part-time and casual staff may not be greatly interested in careers as VET practitioners; • Remotely located practitioners have restricted access to both collegial support and institutional support for professional development; and • Being a VET practitioner is a low status job compared to university and school teaching; professional pride may be lacking.